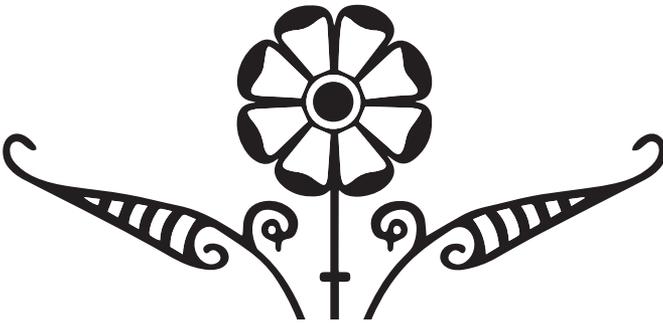




# XAVERIAN BROTHERS

Associate Handbook



In Harmony Small Things Grow

# An Invitation to Reflect

**A**s you consider your call to the Xaverian Brothers Associate Program, we invite you to reflect on the Charism of the Xaverian Brothers. Contained within this volume are several resources to help focus your reflection and orient your prayer. First, you will find "A Description of the Xaverian Charism as Lived by the Xaverian Associates." In addition to what is contained within the "Preamble" to this description, this statement provides an opportunity to reflect on the hopes and aspirations of the Associates with whom you are joining in communion through the Associate Program. In addition to the charism descriptions, you will find "Meditations" and "Prayers" that are based on the *Fundamental Principles* of the Brothers. We hope that you will take the time to rest in these words and allow them to touch you in the silence of your heart.

May your engagement with these texts be fruitful. We look forward to your application to the Program, which can be obtained by making contact with our Associate Program Coordinator (that contact information can be found on the back of this Handbook). We also recommend that, as part of your discernment, you attend an Associate gathering in your region. If you need help finding that information, again, contact the Associate Program Coordinator, or a Brother or Associate that you know in your area. Ω

# A Description of the Xaverian Charism Preamble

*A preamble that captures a general description of the charism for Brothers, Associates, and Collaborators.*

**W**e, Xaverian Brothers, associates, and collaborators are a true religious family, striving to fulfill the spiritual aspirations that Theodore James Ryken had for his Congregation.<sup>1</sup> Following the path of our Founder, we are called to live ordinary lives that give witness to God's unconditional love. We believe that the Xaverian calling is a way of being put in our place in the world,<sup>2</sup> a place of humility and simplicity, from which we receive the grace to turn toward God, fall in love with God, and put ourselves in God's service as followers of Jesus Christ.<sup>3</sup> Within each distinctive life choice, we are further invited to attentiveness, simplicity, flexibility and openness to the common, unspectacular flow of everyday life.<sup>4</sup> We unite ourselves to God through an integrated life of both contemplation and service.<sup>5</sup> Through the Xaverian Way we are awakened by the Spirit of God to our own graced potential and freely offer that giftedness in service to the gospel. Through our ministry, in particular among the poor and the marginalized, we work to help others discover their own uniqueness so they, too, may "share the love of God with the world through their own giftedness."<sup>6</sup> In a spirit of hospitality, we try our utmost to be approachable and available, as true brothers and sisters who welcome others and accompany them in the joys and sorrows of their lives. Ω

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> An allusion to Ryken's *Apologia* addressed to Bishop Jan Baptist Malou, 1864. CFXGA, 3.5.1.4: "Consequently, what I established in 1839 must remain an authentic religious society.... The spirit that the Xaverian Congregation must have is the Religious spirit. This is the whole community's calling as intended by the founder for himself and all those who wish to associate with him. Therefore it is and should be the calling for all and nobody should dare to enter the congregation without primarily striving after the same religious spirit...."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the working paper on Xaverian Spirituality and the importance of place (ground) for the middle-Dutch mystics. (Working Paper, p. 17 and following). A further explanation of this is found in the Working Paper on Xaverian Life Form (p. 35), in the section on Community.

<sup>3</sup> Cf. the revised translation of Ryken's description of his conversion (Working Paper on Xaverian Spirituality, p. 23 in the English version): "at the age of nineteen, after powerfully being put in my place, I turned toward God, fell in love, and put myself in His service."

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Working Paper on Xaverian Spirituality p. 22: "Grounded in the ordinary, a Xaverian Brother is further invited to dispose himself to a life of attentiveness, simplicity and openness to the unspectacular flow of daily life. His way is the 'ordinary way.' He is invited to live in gratitude and in awe of all that which typically escapes attention or notice because of its smallness, difference, foreignness, unimportance, brokenness or insignificance. To do so, he must willingly eschew any attitude, behavior or involvement that exalts or promotes superiority, privilege, exclusivity or entitlement. He must be open and hospitable to the unknown and the unexpected, ready to listen, appraise and respond with a spirit of faith, hope and love."

<sup>5</sup> Cf. Theodore James Ryken's *Plan* (ca. 1837-38) "We want to give now our attention to the total picture of this present plan and consider two excellent qualities which will be found in this Congregation and which are considered to be great in the Church, namely the contemplative and active lives. In fact, if it is God's pleasure to lift our proposed plan to that very height that we intend and of which we hope that it is pleasing to Him, then the members will have the privilege of following both the lives of Martha and Mary." [*Plan*, §61-63]

<sup>6</sup> An allusion to the *Fundamental Principles*: "It is through your life of gospel witness / lived in community with others/ that God desires to manifest/ care and compassionate love/ to those/ who are separated and estranged,/ not only from their neighbors, / but/ also from their own uniqueness;/ to those who suffer/ from want,/ neglect, and injustice:/ the poor, the weak, and the oppressed/ of this world./ They too are called/ to experience,/ express,/ and share / the love of God with the world/ through their own giftedness."

# A Description of the Charism as Lived by Xaverian Associates

**A**s Xaverian Associates we believe God is inviting us into the life of the Xaverian Brothers and we choose to accept the invitation to embrace the Xaverian Way. The spirit of the Xaverian charism animates our own vocations through following the ordinary way as exemplified by the founder, Theodore James Ryken.<sup>7</sup> Through our vocation as Associates, we thereby extend the gospel values and diverse ministries of the Brothers through our ecclesial commitment as baptized Christians with the integration of the Xaverian Way into our universal call to holiness.

We endeavor to respond to and embrace Theodore James Ryken's challenge to be formed by the "common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life" and recognize that becoming an Associate enlivens our desire to be a part of the Xaverian community and embrace its values which otherwise would be inaccessible to us. As Associates we accept the Xaverian call with a different expression, yet with the same commitment to its charism, spirituality and values as the Brothers.

We believe that our life of gospel witness, lived individually, with families, neighborhoods and workplaces, is an answer to the call of the Holy Spirit. We are called together with the Xaverian Brothers to share, promote and extend this gift of the Holy Spirit through three commitments:

- Daily Prayer
- Outreach to the poor and marginalized
- Communion with the Xaverian Brothers

As each Associate hears the call of the charism in his or her daily life, prayer forms and the movement toward contemplation will vary. Our uniqueness calls us to pray as we can and we embrace prayer as a conscious communal reflective practice found in the lives of both Mary and Martha. It is with sincerity of heart that we aspire to emulate Mary as we choose the "better part" by turning toward and falling in love with God.

We recognize a prayer life without movement outward toward involvement with the poor and marginalized can become sterile,<sup>8</sup> therefore we commit to ministerial involvement. We embrace Ryken's vision to "mutually help, encourage, and edify one another" and work together. Like Martha, we are impelled to place ourselves in humble service to others. As Associates we believe the gift we have received we give as gift.

Our association means we accept the Xaverian way and make it part of our lives. In doing so, we express our connection with the Brothers through their history, calling and life experiences. We accept that we are being put in our place to better learn through communion and service.

It is our hope that in communion with the Brothers and through service to the poor and marginalized a mutual and energizing commitment, affirmation and vocation transpire. We feel called, together with the Xaverian Brothers, to share, promote and extend the gift of the Holy Spirit, to work to recognize our ordinariness by acting in harmony with each other and by living with the knowledge that God has placed us here, in our place of holiness, in order to give back that which we have been given. Ω

## Notes

<sup>7</sup> Letter from Theodore James Ryken to Mr. G.N. Hermans, (14 November 1844).

<sup>8</sup> From "Growing Spiritually Through Prayer", Brother Paul Feeney, C.F.X., 2012.

# Meditations

**A**s you prayerfully reflect on your desire to be a Xaverian Associate, we invite you to meditate on the following spiritual reflections which are adapted from the *Fundamental Principles* of the Xaverian Brothers and are based on the teachings of the Congregation's founder, Theodore James Ryken. They invite you to foster an attitude of openness to the needs of the church and the world and a willingness to follow Christ wherever he leads.

We have freely chosen to respond to the call of God, to live a life of love in faith and trust as disciples of Jesus Christ.



It is through us that God desires to show unconditional love to the peoples of the world in these times, and to offer them the freedom of the children of God. If God wants to use sinners for this work, God is not obliged to give an account to anybody.



As a disciple of Jesus Christ, you are called to follow in his footsteps and offer God's healing touch of love through your words and deeds to all you meet in your journey of life.



You have responded to the invitation: "Come follow me." Day by day you will need to renew your response. Do not become discouraged over the difficulties you encounter.

Remember, Jesus your brother has walked this path before you. In you, as Risen Lord, he wants to walk this path again, and his Spirit, the Spirit of God, now guides you.



Listen to your brothers and sisters. Be compassionate with them in their difficulties. Bear with them in their weaknesses, and encourage, affirm, and support them in their gifts, for by doing so you enable them to realize the gifts that God has given them for service.



At times you will discover that God's ways are not your ways, and God's thoughts are not your thoughts. When this happens, try to surrender yourself trustingly into the arms of God who knows you, understands you, and loves you.



God asks you to "make his word your home." To do this, you must be willing to spend time each day in solitude and prayer, opening yourself to God's living word.



It is our communion with the living God that is at the heart of our lives as sons and daughters of God. We are disciples of Jesus and witnesses of his spirit. We are members of his body and brothers and sisters to the world.





Theodore James Ryken  
*Founder of the Xaverian Brothers*



Saint Francis Xavier  
*Patron of the Xaverian Brothers*

The cost of your discipleship is your very life, freely consecrated to God and offered to the world as a sign of God's love and care. If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined.



It is through your life of gospel witness that God desires to manifest care and compassionate love to those who are separated and estranged, not only from their neighbors but also from their own uniqueness—those who suffer from want, neglect, and injustice: the poor, the weak, and the oppressed of this world.



Listen to one another, be compassionate with one another in your difficulties, bear with one another in your weaknesses, encourage and support one another. Affirm others in their gifts, for by doing so you enable them to realize the gifts that God has given them for the service of the gospel.



As a follower of Jesus, keep ever before you the motto of the Congregation: *Concordia res parvae crescunt*. In harmony small things grow. For it is only in harmony that you will grow spiritually, that the love of God will grow in your world, and that the kingdom of God will grow to completeness.



In your life of following Christ, you must allow yourself to be given away, together with your brothers and sisters, as nourishment for others, as bread that is broken. Ω

# Prayers

**A**gain, as you reflect on your desire to be a Xaverian Associate, we invite you to pray for God's guidance. We encourage you to set aside 20 minutes or so daily for this, using whatever prayer practices work best for you and/or the prayers below, which are drawn from the *Fundamental Principles* of the Xaverian Brothers.

*We have freely chosen to respond to the call of God, to live a life of love in faith and trust as disciples of Jesus Christ.*

Loving God, I freely choose at this moment  
to continue this sacred journey of life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.  
I stand before you, sometimes weak and faltering,  
but willing to begin anew.  
Bless me with your gifts of love, faith, and trust  
that I might answer your call to serve others today.



*If God wants to use sinners for this work, God is not obliged to give an account to anybody.*

Lord Jesus, so often I pray: Have mercy on me, I am a sinner!  
But here I stand before you, really and truly acknowledging  
my weaknesses and my need.  
You do not condemn me  
or turn me away.  
Neither should I condemn others  
or turn them away.  
May I reach out to all in need with your mercy.

*You have responded to the invitation: "Come follow me." Day by day you will need to renew your response.*

Jesus my Brother, I have said yes to your challenge:  
Come follow me. But each day this challenge is new for me  
and my need for your guidance grows.  
Lift me up when I am discouraged.  
Strengthen me when I encounter difficulties.  
I renew my commitment to you now  
—in spite of my limitations and my fears.



*Remember, Jesus your brother has walked this path before you. In you, as Risen Lord, he wants to walk this path again.*

Jesus my dear Friend, you have walked this path before me,  
and you want to walk it again through me.  
I don't understand why or how your Spirit works within me.  
I don't comprehend how you can love me so much.  
But I want to believe that you do.  
Walk with me then in all I say and do this day.



*Listen to your brothers and sisters. Be compassionate with them in their difficulties.*

You ask me, O God, to recognize the face of Jesus  
in the hungry, the poor, the homeless.  
You ask me to offer compassion to my brothers and sisters  
when they are weak or discouraged and you ask me to listen, to  
encourage, and to affirm them.  
Give me, please, the grace I need this day to be Christ for others.



*Try to surrender yourself trustingly into the arms of God who knows you, understands you, and loves you.*

Jesus, dear friend and giver of all good things,  
help me to turn my life over to God as you did.  
Help me to surrender myself trustingly as you did.  
Help me to believe that God knows me,  
understands me, and loves me.  
Above all, help me to accept your gift of peace  
that I might be open to all that God ask of me in the future.

~ ~ ~

*God asks you to "make his word your home." To do this, you must be willing to spend time each day in solitude and prayer.*

Holy Spirit, Spirit of the living Christ,  
empower me to be at home with God's Word  
and to have it so alive in me that I want to  
reach out to touch and heal the lives of others.  
Come Holy Spirit and anoint me for God's service. Amen.

~ ~ ~

*It is our communion with the living God that is at the heart of our lives as sons and daughter of God.*

Loving God, being one with you is at the center of my life,  
and I want to acknowledge this gift in all my words and actions.  
Through Jesus and his Spirit, you come to me always.  
May I open the door of my heart each day, each hour, each  
moment.  
I ask this through Jesus who stands and knocks. Amen.

*The cost of your discipleship is your very life, freely consecrated to God and offered to the world as a sign of God's love and care.*

Great Creator God, if you can make a way in the desert and streams in the wasteland, what wonderful things can you make of me! Today I start out fresh, as if today were my first day. Today I celebrate my discipleship and all the gifts you have given me. Help me to share them generously and joyfully as signs of your constant love and care. Amen.



*If you allow yourself to be formed by God through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of everyday life, you will gradually experience a liberation and a freedom never before imagined.*

Dear God, I want to allow myself to be formed by you and to trust that you will show me the way. Help me to believe that you call me to do ordinary things and to do them well, and in this way I will be formed as your disciple through the common, ordinary, unspectacular flow of my everyday life. Amen. Ω

# For More Information...

To learn more about the Xaverian Brothers Associate Program,  
please contact our coordinator:

Brother Paul Murray, C.F.X.

410-646-6771

[pmurray@xaverianbrothers.org](mailto:pmurray@xaverianbrothers.org)

Also, visit us online:

[xaverianbrothers.org](http://xaverianbrothers.org)

[livingthecharism.com](http://livingthecharism.com)

[facebook.com/XaverianBrothers](https://www.facebook.com/XaverianBrothers)

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